

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 799  
By Sontany

A RESOLUTION to recognize Mary Frances Lyle on the occasion of her retirement as lobbyist for the Nashville Women's Political Caucus.

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that the members of this legislative body should honor those exceptional advocates whose commitment to social equity has improved the lives of all Tennesseans; and

WHEREAS, Mary Frances Lyle, is one such estimable advocate for change, whose efforts on behalf of women, children, and families affected significant legislation of real and lasting consequence; and

WHEREAS, throughout her illustrious twenty-four year career as the sole lobbyist for the Nashville Women's Political Caucus, Ms. Lyle served with the utmost acumen and alacrity; and

WHEREAS, Mary Frances Lyle began college at sixteen years of age in 1952, a time when young women were afforded very limited choices of profession; as a consequence, Ms. Lyle initially discarded her dream of becoming a lawyer; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Lyle spent the next twelve years struggling to complete a B.A. in Education while raising her four children; through her persistence, she graduated magna cum laude in 1966, when the children were five, seven, nine, and eleven years of age; and

WHEREAS, after teaching third grade for ten years, Ms. Lyle applied to and was accepted by Vanderbilt University Law School in 1976; as a result of her own struggles, she developed a deep understanding of the barriers women must overcome in order to achieve their potential, and at every opportunity to speak to groups of women, Ms. Lyle has encouraged them to follow their vocational dreams regardless of age, educational background, or station in life; and

WHEREAS, as a law student, Mary Frances Lyle worked as a volunteer law clerk at what was then called Legal Services of Nashville and participated in a survey of sales of

weekly-premium insurance policies to low-income individuals, most of whom were women living in housing projects; the results of this research culminated in a published study, which was cited in a Federal Trade Commission report; the television program, "60 Minutes," used the Nashville study as part of its presentation on the issue, and Ms. Lyle testified before state legislative and federal congressional committees with regard to the sale of insurance to the poor; and

WHEREAS, in 1981, Ms. Lyle was hired as a lobbyist by the Nashville Women's Political Caucus to advocate women's issues in the Tennessee General Assembly; during her twenty-four years of astute service, Mary Frances Lyle worked assiduously to promote legislation affecting women, children, and families; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Lyle's lobbying efforts on behalf of the Nashville Women's Political Caucus were instrumental to the Caucus's success in drafting and passing family law legislation that provided for economic recognition of the homemaker's role as contribution toward the acquisition of assets, and recognition of pension benefits as marital property; and

WHEREAS, several years prior to the federal Family Leave Act, Ms. Lyle helped the Caucus draft and pass legislation to give women up to four months unpaid maternity leave and allow them to return to their jobs without loss of benefits or seniority; and

WHEREAS, through Ms. Lyle's invaluable efforts, the Caucus established the Tennessee Childcare Facilities Loan Guarantee Corporation and obtained one million dollars in state funding to guarantee loans for the start-up or expansion of childcare facilities; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Lyle aided in the drafting and passing of legislation requiring the Secretary of State to publish an annual directory of boards and commissions and to publish a monthly listing of vacancies; and

WHEREAS, Ms. Lyle's persistent labors on behalf of the Caucus ensured the passage of a bill defining sexual harassment and requiring that notice of the law be mailed to all employers in the state; and

WHEREAS, further significant legislative accomplishments of Mary Frances Lyle include: the drafting and passage of legislation requiring alternating appointments of women to the Tennessee Board of Education, the Board of Regents, University of Tennessee Board of Trustees, and the Tennessee Higher Education Commission until membership on these boards reflects the proportion of men and women in the general population; legislation creating the

Domestic Violence State Coordinating Council for the purpose of designing a domestic violence training course and curriculum for law enforcement and judicial personnel; legislation prohibiting health insurers from denying coverage or refusing to pay benefits to victims of domestic violence; statutes passed, in conjunction with the League of Women Voters and several other women's organizations, to establish the Tennessee Economic Council on Women; and

WHEREAS, Mary Frances Lyle's advocacy for family issues on behalf of the Nashville Women's Political Caucus is evident in the 2003 legislation she helped establish as state policy, "It is the public policy of this state to encourage and support marriage, and to encourage family arrangements that provide for the rearing of healthy and productive children who will become healthy and productive citizens of our state."; and

WHEREAS, a founding member, and the first female member, of the law firm of Bruce, Weathers, Corley, and Lyle, Ms. Lyle has received numerous accolades for her dedication to family law, including induction as a Master Attorney into the Harry Phillips Inn of Court in 2002, and inclusion in the "Best Lawyers in America" for five consecutive years; and

WHEREAS, a public-minded citizen of the highest order, Ms. Lyle believes it is particularly important to address the issues of poverty, oppression, and political disenfranchisement; she is a founding member of Project to End Abuse through Counseling and Education (PEACE), an organization that works with perpetrators of domestic violence to help eliminate repeat episodes of violence, and she has served on the Board of Directors of Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA); Ms. Lyle was also a founding member and president of Tennessee Leadership and served as president of both the League of Women Voters of Nashville and Planned Parenthood; and

WHEREAS, a consummate professional of the utmost integrity, Ms. Lyle has served in leadership positions in several legal organizations, including the Nashville Bar Association, the Tennessee Bar Association, and the American Bar Association, and she has also contributed her time and numerous talents to the following organizations: ACLU, ALTRUSA, American Association of University Women, Board of Ethical Conduct of the Metro Nashville Council, Business and Professional Women, CABLE, Madison Women's Health Center Advisory Board, NAACP, National Organization of Women, NAWBO, WIN, Women's SPARC, and the YWCA; and

WHEREAS, Mary Frances Lyle has often been recognized for her professional excellence; the Tennessee Lawyers Association for Women awarded her the "Overcoming the Odds" award in 1990, and she was named "Woman of the Year" in 1990 by the Business and Professional Woman's Club; she was awarded the Harry Burn Award by the Tennessee Women's Political Caucus in 1995; and in 1998, Ms. Lyle was named the Small Business Administration Advocate of the Year in Tennessee; in 2004, she received the ATHENA Award for her outstanding leadership; and

WHEREAS, her many honors and achievements aside, Mary Frances Lyle believes the opportunities she has had are not of her own making, but are the result of the love and support she receives from her family, her church, and her community; and

WHEREAS, wholly committed to the noble precepts of public service that have earned Tennessee fame as the "Volunteer State," Ms. Lyle should be specially recognized for her life of purpose and commitment; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED FOURTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we extend to Mary Frances Lyle our heartfelt thanks for her exceptional service to the people of Tennessee as lobbyist for the Nashville Women's Political Caucus, and we wish her every continued success in all future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.